

**TOWN/VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD  
JOINT BOARD MEETING  
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN  
BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES  
Minutes of January 28, 2014**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Chris Bradley, Brad Denny, Matthew Gadbois (absent), and Kenneth W. Goslant. Trustee Chair Dennis Donahue, Trustees Kevin T. Beal, K. David Maxwell, and James R. Wilson (absent). Also present were Town Manager Robert Lewis, Acting Village Manager Stephen Fitzhugh, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Michele Braun (Zoning Administrator), Arlington Supplee (Board of Listers), William Smith (Zoning Board of Adjustment), Eileen Supplee, Charles Morse, David Black, Lise Ewald, Nicole Duncan (Central Vermont Medical Center), Richard Morley (Central Vermont Medical Center), David Magida (Norwich University), Robert Lord (E.F. Wall & Associates), Charlie Goodwin, Bernard Byrne, Shelby Perry, Elroy C. Hill, Craig Sullivan, MD (Green Mountain Family Practice), Lucinda Sullivan, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Prior to the regular meeting, the Town Selectmen held a Public Hearing beginning at 6:05 p.m. for the purpose of receiving written and/or oral views from the public regarding a proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaw for the Regulation of Land Use in the Town and Village of Northfield, Vermont. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to take a step toward the discontinuation of the Recreation Zoning District by changing an area of approximately nine (9) acres from Recreation zoning to Urban Residential zoning, in order to allow for higher-density, mixed-use development consistent with the zoning, development, and existing infrastructure of the surrounding area. In addition, "public and private outdoor recreation" is added as an allowed use in the Urban Residential Zoning District. The text of the amendment to Section 6.02 Recreation is as follows: *This District is amended in 2013: a portion of the Norwich University parcel currently zoned Recreation (parcel 011-027.000, commonly known as the old ski hill) is changed from Recreation to Urban Residential. The division of the parcel is defined by drawing a line from the eastern tip of Richard Olson's property (parcel 017-030.000) north-easterly to the southeast corner of the Urban Residential zone and assigning the area to the west of that line to the Urban Residential district consistent with the zoning district of the adjacent properties, and the land to the east of that line shall remain Recreation.* This is the second of two (2) public hearings that the Town Selectmen will hold on this topic.

Charles Morse expressed his support for this zoning change and for the course of action that the Planning Commission has taken since E.F. Wall first applied for a permit to construct a new medical office building on Norwich University property near Crescent Avenue. The permit was denied at the time because the proposed site was zoned for recreational purposes only. Since that time, the Planning Commission has acted to rezone the parcel so that it would match that of the surrounding area and therefore allow the construction. Mr. Morse is concerned that as the Irene-damaged houses along Water Street become municipal properties through the FEMA buyout process, the property taxes that had been paid to the Town will be lost. In addition, additional tax payments have been lost as local businesses (i.e. Wall-Goldfinger, Rite Aid, etc.) have left Northfield. Mr. Morse felt that Northfield should be encouraging the development of new businesses here, including this medical center.

Bernard Byrne lives near the proposed building site and he has heard the complaints about the amount of traffic that the new facility would generate on South Main Street and Crescent Avenue. Mr. Byrne has been a Traffic Engineer for the State of Vermont for twenty-eight (28) years and it was his view that given the size of the new building (10,000 square feet) and the proposed hours of business, the resulting "trip generation" would have only a "minuscule impact" on the aforementioned streets.

Lise Ewald provided the Board members with a copy of a letter from the Conservation Commission to the Planning Commission last summer that raised concerns about the proposed rezoning. The letter cited a study that indicated that "two-thirds of Northfield residents favored additional protection of recreational lands within the town." The Conservation Commission's letter also expressed the fear that the precedent of rezoning a recreational zone so that a new business could be built might result in similar proposals in the near future. The letter also noted the uniqueness of the Paine Mountain recreational area and suggested that any zoning changes there should be carefully considered. Ms. Ewald then asked the Board members for their opinions on the proposed rezoning. Select Board Chair Quinn stated that it was his intention to listen to the views expressed tonight and then make a decision based upon what he considered best for the community. Ms. Ewald asked if the public would have any input into this decision-making process. Chair Quinn said that this is the purpose of this Public Hearing. Selectman Bradley would prefer to withhold his own opinion until after this Public Hearing has been closed.

Ms. Ewald asked if there has been any calculation of how much additional property tax revenue would be generated by the proposed new medical facility. Selectman Bradley stated that such speculation should not affect how the Board will decide the question at hand; the only issue tonight is whether the Planning Commission has made a strong enough case for this rezoning.

Ms. Ewald added that as an adjacent property owner, she is concerned about the existing water runoff problems in the area that will only be worsened by the proposed construction. She also feels that the Planning Commission "fast tracked" the decision to "simplify" zoning districts in order to benefit this one project. Ms. Ewald believes that other potential sites for the project should have been considered.

William Smith is a local attorney as well the chair of Northfield's Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). He wanted to remind people that even if the Select Board approves that rezoning request tonight, that is not the end of the process. The proposed project's "conditional use" application will have to go before the ZBA for approval. In addition, there is the Act 250 approval process that would follow.

Mr. Smith then added that he and his family make use of the Paine Mountain recreational areas and he felt that Norwich University has been generous in upgrading the trail system while allowing for public access. He added that recreational use of private property is a privilege, not a right.

There being no other questions or comments, the Public Hearing closed at 6:23 p.m. The Joint Board Meeting began immediately.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** In order to accommodate the members of the public who attended the Public Hearing on the topic, the agenda item "Adoption of Zoning Bylaw Amendment" will be moved up to the top of "Joint Discussion." In addition, approval of minutes that were received after the agenda was posted last Friday will be added to tonight's agenda.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

**a. Arlington Supplee, Board of Listers: Town-Wide Reappraisal Update.** Mr. Supplee has been providing the Boards with periodic updates on the progress of the town-wide reappraisal. He reported that the exterior inspections have been shut down for the winter. Until they resume next summer, the focus will be on data entry into the new CAMA system. Mr. Supplee stated that the process to date has been relatively successful with nearly three-quarters (74.68%) of the exterior and interior inspections completed. All structures located on gravel roads have been completed along with those located on Vermont Route 12 South, Vermont Route 12A, Vermont Route 64, and in Northfield Falls.

Mr. Supplee added that during the data collection process, errors that occurred during the last town-wide reappraisal have been discovered and are being corrected. These corrections will result in some minor increases and decreases in property valuations.

Trustee Beal asked what was meant by the category "Refusal." Mr. Supplee stated that so far seven (7) homeowners have refused to allow interior inspections. When this happens, the appraisers have to make their best estimate regarding the property valuation based on the exterior inspection. The homeowners are entitled to grieve to the Board of Civil Authority (BCA) if they feel it is too high. However, they cannot then refuse if the BCA requests an interior inspection. Mr. Supplee then explained the "Future" category: interior work is being done on thirteen (13) structures so these inspections are delayed until the renovations have been completed.

The Board members thanked Mr. Supplee for his presentation tonight and for the good news regarding the progress on the reappraisal.

**V. JOINT DISCUSSION**

**a. Adoption of Zoning Bylaw Amendment.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the adoption of the Zoning Bylaw Amendment as recommended by the Planning Commission. Selectman Bradley stated that the current Municipal Plan says that zoning regulations are designed to protect the urban core along the Dog River and Vermont Route 12. Areas outside this core are dedicated to lower density uses such as agriculture and recreation. Selectman Bradley noted that the plan also allows for ongoing planning so that changes can be made to adjust zoning restrictions to accommodate new developments. Selectman Bradley does not believe that rezoning this particular parcel constitutes "spot zoning" as the intention is to make it consistent with the adjacent parcels now zoned as "urban residential." Since he has concluded that the Planning Commission has acted in accordance with the Municipal Plan, Selectman Bradley supports the zoning bylaw amendment.

Selectman Denny also supports the amendment. He added that his decision is based solely on his opinion that the Planning Commission is correct to rezone this particular parcel. Although there has been some discussion of the planned use for the rezoned parcel, this question ultimately will be decided by other entities, i.e. the Northfield ZBA and the Act 250 review board. Therefore, there will be ample opportunity for additional public input as the process continues.

Although he has some concerns regarding how the adjacent landowners will be affected by the proposed construction project, Selectman Goslant believes that the Planning Commission has followed the rules and that the new medical facility would be a benefit to the community. He still hopes that E.F. Wall and Norwich University will take steps to buffer the impact on the neighboring landowners, i.e. planting trees, etc. Village Manager Fitzhugh (who also serves as the Planning Commission Chair) stated that a site review plan will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and this issue can be addressed at that time. The only concern at this time is the rezoning itself.

Chair Quinn feels that the Planning Commission has put a lot of thought into their rezoning recommendation. He is excited about the positive impact that this particular planned development would have upon the Northfield community.

David Magida, Norwich University's Facilities Operations Administrator, confirmed that the university strongly supports the Planning Commission's recommendation.

Trustee Beal and Trustee Chair Donahue also support the amendment. Although the discussion of the proposed use for the rezoned parcel was enlightening, Trustee Beal also felt that the main issue was whether the Planning Commission acted properly and followed the proper process. Chair Donahue repeated the earlier statements regarding the additional steps that will need to be taken before any planned construction commences and that there will be ample opportunity for public input. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Minutes: December 9, 2013 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Minutes: December 30, 2013 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-1, with Selectman Quinn abstaining.**
- d. **Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2014 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-1, with Trustee Maxwell abstaining.**
- e. **Approval of Minutes: January 13, 2014 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- f. **Approval of Minutes: January 14, 2014 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- g. **Approval of Minutes: January 21, 2014 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- h. **Approval of Minutes: January 22, 2014 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- i. **Approval of Minutes: January 23, 2014 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- j. **Approval of FY 2014/2015 Consolidated Budget.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the FY 2014/2015 Consolidated Budget. Trustee Beal noted that if the budget is approved on Town Meeting Day, the estimated tax rate would decrease by 4.83%. Finance Director Baroffio noted that this figure assumes the passage of all the appropriation articles. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**
- k. **Town Manager Search Process Update.** Selectman Denny noted that even though the Town Manager Search Committee has the same membership as the Merger Transition Committee, Trustee Beal now will be the Chair of the new committee. Selectman Denny noted that Trustee Beal has recent experience in such matters as the Village had to search for a new manager last summer. He added that Trustee Beal's skills with electronic media, computers, etc. were superior to his own. Trustee Beal felt that Selectman Denny had done an excellent job to this point.  
  
Selectman Denny then discussed the advertisement the committee generated for the job search. He noted that a small adjustment would have to be made to the salary range but if there was no objection, the Vermont League of Cities of Towns (VLCT) would place the advertisement in various printed and online venues starting next week (02/03/14). The committee decided to forego advertising in the *Burlington Free Press*, which was the most expensive (\$950). Selectman Goslant believed that an ad in the Sunday edition of the *Burlington Free Press* would prove worthwhile despite the added expense. He felt that the *Burlington Free Press* had more statewide coverage than the other newspapers listed. Selectman Denny stated that the decision to forego this particular newspaper was financial only. Selectman Bradley suggested dropping the *Seven Days* advertisement in favor of the *Burlington Free Press*. Chair Quinn would favor advertising in both newspapers as Northfield is searching for a manager who (hopefully) will be here for the long term. He does not oppose spending a little extra money in order to secure the best candidate. Selectman Denny agreed to restore the ad in the *Burlington Free Press*. As regards the advertisement text, Manager Fitzhugh would like to include a reference to the management of public utilities, especially the electric department. There was no objection.  
  
Manager Fitzhugh also would like "experience with enterprise funds" added to the draft job description. Chair Quinn felt that this experience should be cited as desirable but not necessary. The committee will work on the proper wording and return to the Boards with an updated draft.
- l. **Town/Village Merger Transition Update.** Selectman Denny noted that the committee members have been solely focused on the manager search process recently. They should have something new to report regarding consolidated municipal ordinances, etc. at the next Joint Board Meeting (02/24/14).
- m. **LED Streetlight Replacement Project Update.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that the project schedule has been submitted to Efficiency Vermont in order to get the rebate payment in the works. The Village now will be going out to bid for the light fixtures and the labor to install them.

- n. **Economic Development Committee Meeting: Wednesday, January 29, 2014.** The committee's next meeting will be held tomorrow night at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building. Manager Lewis noted that the agenda and additional information regarding this meeting was included in the Board packets.

**VI. BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN**

- a. **Approval of Minutes: January 21, 2014 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Bills: Warrant #15-14.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve Warrant #15-14 in the amount of \$46,663.30. Selectman Goslant noted that Elroy Hill very generously donated fifteen (15) pair of safety gloves to the Town. He then asked if money spent on the dog catcher was recouped when stray dog fines were collected. Manager Lewis said that was the plan; he is working on trying to find an alternative holding site other than the Central Vermont Humane Society so that we can retain more of the fine amounts. Selectman Goslant asked about a recent increase in paramedic intercepts. Manager Lewis was not sure but he suggested it might have been due to reduced local coverage over the holiday season. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through January 19, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$53,585.04. Selectman Bradley asked about the increase in police overtime expenses. Manager Lewis stated that we now have an officer who will be gone for up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Chair Quinn felt that this might be a good time to hire additional part-time officers. Manager Lewis will discuss this with Chief James Dziobek. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. **Approval of 2014 Town Meeting Warning.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to approve and sign the 2014 Town Meeting Warning. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- e. **Approval of Road and Bridge Standards.** Manager Lewis stated that Northfield needs to readopt its own road and bridge standards each year in order to meet state standards and better qualify for grant funds. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to approve and sign the revised Road and Bridge Standards. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- f. **First Consideration of a Fund Balance Policy.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve and sign the Fund Balance Policy. Manager Lewis stated that the first draft was revised to better clarify and provide a specific amount for the "unassigned fund balance." This is the major difference in this policy from the one that the Village Trustees adopted in 2012. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- g. **Status Report: Various Projects.**
  - 1. **Board Meeting Live Video Streaming, etc.** Selectman Bradley stated that he had been asked by Chair Quinn to look at ways to modernize the delivery of documentation to the public, including live video streaming board meetings directly to the Internet. He spoke to George Goodrich at Trans-Video about this and learned that a special camera would have to be purchased that could simultaneously televise the meeting while live video streaming it. The Town could purchase such a camera for about \$2000; this amount has been set aside for this purpose in the next fiscal year budget. Selectman Bradley also has been looking at templates that could be used to revamp the municipal website. Trustee Beal is willing to help with the website redesign. Selectman Bradley noted that Norwich University has a lot of expertise with live video streaming.
  - 2. **Ancient Roads.** During his time on the Select Board, Selectman Bradley has been looking into what needs to be done regarding potential ancient roads and trails in Northfield before the July 2015 deadline when municipalities will be required to specify which (if any) they would like to retain. Since he will be leaving the Select Board in March, Selectman Bradley will be attending the next meeting of the Conservation Commission (02/12/14) to see if its members would like to take up the torch on this. He felt that the Town should give this matter a full exploration so that any old road and/or trail that might be of future use to the community isn't lost forever.  
  
Chair Quinn asked if Selectman Bradley would be interested in helping the Select Board with this even after his term expires. Selectman Bradley said that he might be willing. Selectman Goslant was a bit confused; he was under the impression that the Town was looking into reducing the number of roads maintained by the municipality. Selectman Bradley said that these ancient roads would only be kept as trails or Class 4 roads. Trustee Beal added that trail and/or road improvement would be a separate process from retaining the right to do so in the future. Chair Donahue stated that some of these roads/trails might provide the only public right of way to isolated properties. Trustee Beal thought that the local ATV club and VAST might be willing to assist in locating possible trails that they could use. Selectman Bradley also felt that the residents of the Veterans' Place, the local Boy Scout troops, hikers, etc. might be willing to help with this. He added that the adjoining landlords also have a role in the process.

3. **Town Highway Subcommittee.** Selectman Goslant reported that the subcommittee will be meeting this coming Friday (01/31/14) at 9:00 a.m. Selectman Gadbois will be back in town by then and able to attend. Chair Quinn would like to have the subcommittee minutes available before the next Select Board meeting (02/10/14).

**VII. BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES**

- a. **Approval of Bills: Warrant #15-14.** Motion by Trustee Beal, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve Warrant #15-14 in the amount of \$45,828.03. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **Proposed Sale of Former Police Station (52 East Street).** Manager Fitzhugh reported that he has had some correspondence from local attorney William Smith, who is drafting the property bid documents. He will forward this information to the Village Trustees. Selectman Goslant asked if the Town Selectmen could be kept informed of any developments. Manager Fitzhugh had no objection.
- c. **Status Reports: Various Projects.** The Village Trustees had nothing to add.

**VIII. MANAGERS' REPORTS**

- a. **Village Manager Fitzhugh**
  1. **Northfield Electric Department (NED) Terms and Conditions.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that the NED Terms and Conditions has been presented to the Public Service Board.
  2. **Village Common Rehabilitation Project.** Manager Fitzhugh reported some debate lately over whether the cost of the new light fixtures should be included in the project budget.
  3. **Sewer Pipe Lining.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that he has signed the contract to have this work done (as authorized by the Village Trustees at their last meeting).
  4. **Possible Northfield Solar Farm.** Manager Fitzhugh had been contacted by the person who developed the solar farm in Williamstown. He asked if Northfield has considered siting a solar farm. The wellfield seems to be a good location if the municipality would like to pursue this. This might include a possible land swap with Norwich University as it owns some of this property. Norwich University has expressed interest in owning a Village property near the campus. Manager Fitzhugh will provide the Board with more information as it becomes available. Trustee Beal noted that a Northfield solar farm was one of the long-term goals discussed at last summer's Joint Board Retreat.
- b. **Town Manager Lewis**
  1. **Combined Facilities.** Chair Quinn asked about the status of this project. Manager Lewis stated that another Public Hearing would have to be held before the next Select Board meeting (02/10/14) because the last one was not warned sufficiently to meet federal rules. After the hearing is held, a formal letter of approval will be provided for the CDBG-DR grant funds. The Town then can go out to bid to find the architectural firm that will develop a plan to co-locate the Fire Department and Ambulance Service.
  2. **Vehicle Maintenance Tracking Program.** Selectman Goslant wanted to know why a new laptop computer had to be purchased so the mechanic could input this information. Manager Lewis thought it was best that the mechanic had something mobile to use while moving around the Town Garage, etc.

**IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items**

- a. **Elroy Hill: Winter Road Maintenance.** Mr. Hill feels that it would be ineffective to purchase a Ford 550 with a wing to use for winter road maintenance. This vehicle would not be big enough to perform proper road salting. He would favor keeping the 2005 truck for that purpose. Selectman Goslant stated that he was planning to bring up this matter at the Town Highway Subcommittee meeting later this week. All the highway equipment will be discussed at this meeting. Chair Quinn added that even though the FY 2014/2015 budget discussions are over, the Town is always looking for ways to save money whenever possible.
- b. **Kathleen Lott: Fairground Road Bridge.** Ms. Lott asked if the replacement bridge will be at the same location as the old one. Manager Lewis confirmed that the Town could not obtain FEMA approval to relocate the bridge to better align with the end of Lovers Lane. He added that the new bridge will have a wider pedestrian section.

**X. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to adjourn. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular meetings of the Town Selectmen and Village Trustees respectively held on February 9 and 10, 2014.